

BRIEFS

CHARLIE GARD PASSES WITHOUT TREATMENT

WASHINGTON (BP) — Charlie Gard, the infant at the center of a battle over parental authority in England, has died a week short of his first birthday. "Our beautiful little boy has gone. We are so proud of you Charlie," his mother, Connie Yates, said in a statement, according to the British Broadcasting Corp. (BBC) News. The child was born with a rare condition known as mitochondrial DNA depletion syndrome. Charlie's parents were forced to fight numerous legal battles for the chance to try an experimental treatment, and blamed the drawn-out legal wrangling for leading to his death.

PREGNANCY CENTERS FIGHTING STATE LAW

VIAIPO, Hawaii (BP) — Pro-life pregnancy resource centers in Hawaii have filed suit against a new state law requiring them to point women toward abortion access. The law, signed by Gov. David Ige, a Democrat, on July 11, requires pregnancy resource centers to utilize signs telling women about "the state's" family planning services. Pregnancy centers must post signs on letter-sized paper in at least 22-point font or give each woman a notice in person. In testimony before state lawmakers, Planned Parenthood officials complained that pro-life pregnancy centers give biased, misleading, and false information to women.

OREGON TAXPAYERS TO FUND ABORTIONS

SALEM, Ore. (BP) — Oregon health insurers and taxpayers will soon be paying for abortion, contraceptives, and sterilization under a new law Gov. Kate Brown, a Democrat, has vowed to sign. The new law will forbid health insurance plans from imposing "a deductible... or any other cost-sharing requirement" for abortion, STD screening, prenatal care, post-natal care, and all forms of contraception. Churches and religious nonprofits will be exempt, but employees may turn to Oregon's general fund to cover the cost of abortion.

WCU continues to prove 'Carey Strong'

Jan. tornado not slowing down plans for campus

By Mia A. Overton
Correspondent

July 21 was a hot, sunny summer day in Hattiesburg — six months to the day after William Carey University (WCU) students awoke to rain, thunder, and lightning as storms rolled into the Pine Belt and brought an EF-3 tornado that tore through the campus.

There were no fatalities, and injuries were in single digits. The damage estimate was placed at \$73 million. Three Mississippi Baptist churches in the area were also hit by the tornado.

Great progress has been made in rebuilding the WCU campus in a short amount of time. In those first hours, the university administration assured Mississippi Baptists that their affiliated school would come back stronger than ever. "Carey Strong" was the slogan that sprang from that promise—a slogan that has been demonstrated through the dedication of students, faculty, staff, and the community that supports the university.

"Losing so much in the tornado was a tragedy, but the opportunity to rebuild a better campus is a challenge that comes once in a generation," said WCU President Tommy King on the six-month anniversary of the tornado.

After the spring trimester ended in May, the second phase of repairs and rebuilding began.

Throughout the summer, construction crews have been hard at work around the campus. All dorm rooms are being repainted and new tile floors have been installed. New windows have been installed in almost every building on campus.

The gaping hole on the front of Green Science Hall is no longer there. The walls have been rebuilt and a much-needed elevator installed.

The College of Osteopathic Medicine's anatomy lab was a complete loss and had to be torn down. The new lab is



▲BACK IN BUSINESS – James Turner (center), dean of Baptist-affiliated William Carey University's College of Osteopathic Medicine on the Hattiesburg campus, cuts the ribbon July 27 on the newly-repaired and refurbished Interactive Learning Center, which was among the buildings heavily damaged Jan. 21 when an EF-3 tornado raked the campus. Joining Turner are community members trained for roles in patient simulations at the Center. (Photo courtesy of WCU)

THEN AND NOW - The Interactive Learning Center of the College of Osteopathic Medicine at Baptist-affiliated William Carey University in Hattiesburg suffered major damage (above) in the EF-3 tornado that nearly destroyed the campus on Jan. 21. A ribbon cutting for the newly-repaired and refurbished building (below) was held on July 27. (Photos courtesy of WCU)



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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

An insatiable demand

Daniel Reed Cummings was up for early release from prison a couple of weeks ago, but public outcry dashed those plans. I was taken back to 2007.

As Cummings entered the Lafayette County Courthouse in Oxford in October of that year, the 20-year-old looked for all the world like a clean-cut college kid on his way to church. His suit dapper and his haircut sharp, he didn't look like someone facing a capital murder trial for dragging a University of Mississippi police officer to death with his vehicle during an alcohol- and drug-induced stupor.

Yet there he was, facing Officer Robert Langley's grieving family as well as his own heartbroken kin, pleading guilty to a reduced charge of culpable negligent manslaughter before Lafayette County Circuit Judge Andrew Howarth and receiving in return the maximum sentence of 20 years. If he had been convicted of capital murder as originally charged, the sentence would have been life without parole.

It is difficult for some people to feel sorry for Cummings when they consider the circumstances that led to his sentencing. On October 21, 2006, Langley was on patrol when he pulled over Cummings for speeding. At some point during the stop, Langley reached into Cummings' vehicle through the driver's window and Cummings hit the gas.

Langley, a National Guardsman and married father of four, was dragged about 200 yards and suffered a severe head injury. He died after being airlifted to Regional Medical Center in Memphis.

Toxicology tests conducted on Cummings shortly after the incident indicated there were alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine in his system. He was held without bond in the Lafayette County Jail until his sentencing.

Langley's family is left to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives and move on. News reports at the time indicated it was Langley's family who asked the district attorney not to seek the death penalty, and that they went along

with Monday's guilty plea to a reduced charge.

For their part, Cumming's family reminisces about the athletic career of their strapping, 6'3" son and his selection not so long ago as Mr. Houston Middle School in Germantown, TN. They remember Dan at church camp as a youngster and when he achieved his long-held goal of becoming an Ole Miss student, like his father before him.

So much is gone from both families, never to be recovered. Alcohol, as is almost always the case, is at the root of this tragedy.

Sure, there were other drugs listed in Cumming's toxicology reports, but alcohol was the legal drug listed in the report. If Cumming's descent into drug abuse followed the typical path, he started with alcohol at the gateway drug and gradually worked his way up to the other drugs. It is virtually unheard of for a young person to start with cocaine — or even marijuana — and then discover alcohol. It just doesn't happen that way.

The seemingly eternal question remains to be answered: When will we stop sacrificing people like Robert Langley and Dan Cummings and their families to the god of alcohol?

Alcohol has always had an insatiable demand for more and more victims. With that in mind, think about the fact that every drop of hard liquor sold in Mississippi passes through the state's liquor warehouse, because the State of Mississippi is the only legal wholesaler of hard liquor. That means every drop of hard liquor offered for sale in this state is sold by you and me, because we are the government.

That also means that each of us in a special, perverse way, is responsible for the death of Officer Langley, the lifelong bereavement of his wife and children, the ruination of Dan Cummings, and the never-ending pain inflicted on both families.

Yet they are only a few of the many thousands of victims sacrificed to alcohol in our state each year — all in our name.

Knowing this, can you live with yourself?

Give them solid truth

Spending a week embedded in the youth culture earlier this summer at Falls Creek Baptist Conference Center in Davis, Ok., has left a significant impression on my mind and heart.

I have spent many hours pondering some of my experiences and encounters with Oklahoma Baptist young people. I discovered a large number of intellectually-bright, spiritually-aware, sold-out, Gospel-centered, and culturally-challenged teens.

This has caused me to draw some conclusions about Southern Baptists and the local church ministry. Contrary to what some people may think, many Christian teens are looking for ways to develop a growing, dynamic faith.

These young Christians want to know Jesus on a personal level. They have a longing to grow in understanding how prayer and daily time in the Word really make a difference in their lives.

Every survey I read tells me that parents are still the most influential people in their children's lives. If Southern Baptists want young people who have a dynamic, living faith marked by a deep and abiding relationship with Jesus, we must be parents who demonstrate this relationship.

Teaching is vital and training is more important still, but living out our faith and demonstrating in visible ways through real-life experiences is most important. Parents have the primary responsibility to disciple their children.

Teens who live in two-parent, Christ-centered homes have become a minority. Family dysfunction and parents devoid of a growing relationship with Christ dominate so many teens' lives. This being the case, the church must take greater responsibility in connecting on a personal basis with our teens. These young people need mentors who will invest in their lives, one on one, and disciple them.

Older people need to apply for the job of discipler. One thing my week as camp pastor at Falls Creek did for me was to impress on me that young people are open to relationships with older adults who will love, listen, and guide them.

Another observation involves defense of the faith. Christian young people, as a whole, are unprepared to defend biblical truth. Too often teaching and training in the church leave teens with only a thin



Guest opinion

with Anthony Jordan

veneer of biblical acumen. Tragically these young people are intellectually astute and they want to understand how and why the Bible is so countercultural on moral issues of the day.

If Baptists do not provide a solid apologetic approach to teaching biblical truth, there is going to be a major decline in biblical living in the days ahead. Young people are not obstinate and rebellious; they must be given solid truth that helps them approach the hot button moral issues of the day with intellectual and biblical confidence.

If the church ignores this enormous need, our young people will continue to go away to colleges and universities and be beaten into submission by godless professors and friends. These young people are sent out like defenseless sheep to the slaughter.

Christians, we are guilty; if we do not take seriously the church's responsibility to prepare these young people for the battle of the ages for truth.

It is not wrong to have pizza parties, paintball nights, and a variety of fun events for teens. Indeed, these are a must. However, parents and the church must take full responsibility to take this incredible generation of teens and train them for the cultural battles they will face.

They must be given tools to defend their faith with confidence. Any less is a default by Christian parents and the church on their God-given responsibility.

Jordan is executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma in Oklahoma City. This column first appeared in *The Baptist Messenger* (baptistmessenger.com), the convention's newsjournal, and appears here courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style.

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First Person: Getting aid where it needs to be

By Pat Melancon
Correspondent

It was not how things were supposed to happen.

We were responding to a disastrous earthquake that hit a remote area of Central Asia and killed thousands of men, women, and children. Our three trucks loaded with provisions had just rounded a treacherous bend in the mountain road, skirting the precipice of a canyon.



MELANCON

Suddenly, the two trucks in front of me began slowing down. As I slowed, I watched a boulder roll down the mountain toward the front of the first truck. The driver opened his door and ran from the still-moving vehicle. The driver of the second truck did the same. Both trucks puttered to a stop.

It was an ambush. Within a matter of seconds, a multitude of people were running down the slope toward the abandoned trucks.

I jumped out of my vehicle and yelled to the drivers, "Just let them take it!" The attackers smothered the trucks, grabbing anything they could carry. Young children in the mob joined the fray, only to have their items stolen by stronger looters. Within minutes everything was gone. The vandals were back over the mountain and, again, in hiding.

Catastrophic relief attempts like this incident are heartbreaking. They occur simply because of a lack of good planning. The result is that resources are squandered and good opportunities are lost to truly help people in need.

When things go wrong, it's certainly good to take a step back and evaluate but an even better approach is to seek training first and, thereby, avoid preventable missteps.

After seeing this happen time and again, it would be easy to get discouraged. In the face of our struggles, my organization — Baptist Global Response — has labored over the years to figure out how to strategically provide aid to people in a way that actually helps.

Baptist Global Response undergirds the work of Southern Baptists worldwide and partners with others who are like-minded. Baptist Global Response is not an official entity of the Southern Baptist Convention, but it is rooted in the soil of Southern Baptist life and committed to helping Southern Baptists who care connect with people in need around the world.

Our aim is to model and train others how to give a cup of water in Jesus's name (Matt. 10:42, Mark 9:41) in a way that shows His heart for the world and also recognizes the world's need for Christ.

Many of the common reasons that aid efforts fail to accomplish their goals result from poor planning:

- A pre-distribution assessment of the situation is not done.

- A pre-selected list of the most vulnerable victims and recipients of aid is not created.

- A pre-determined security plan with the community is not agreed upon.

- A restricted access distribution point is not utilized.

- That said, a bit of good strategy planning can facilitate a smooth process for aid efforts:

- Assess the need with both national partners and the affected community.



IN JESUS' NAME — At an undisclosed location in Central Asia, a young boy displaced by armed conflict carries a Southern Baptist-provided food packet for his family. Southern Baptists provided the aid through their gifts to Global Hunger Relief. (BP photo)

- Allow them to tell you what is needed and who should receive the aid.

- Pre-distribute coupons to the recipients to redeem the day of distribution.

- Have the recipients line up and check in before things start.

- Place the check-in point a good distance from the distribution point.

- Distribute the items at a restricted access location (not the back of a truck, for example).

- Plan to distribute everything within one to two hours.

You would be hard-pressed to find a leader in the New Testament who did not support meeting needs, yet they never lost the emphasis on the greater spiritual need. The Gospels abound with instances in which truth was shared and needs were met. Numerous people

came to Christ because of some sort of need.

In the Gospels, Jesus shared the truth about Himself 150-plus times. In nearly 100 of those times, He also brought physical healing and/or relief from hunger.

Luke wrote in the Book of Acts that the church held all things in common to assist those in need (Acts 2:43-47). The result of such concern was the conversion of many. Regional groups of Christians contributed to assist those in need from famine, such as Macedonia and Achaia (Rom. 15:6).

The Apostle Paul connected the physical and spiritual needs of people (Rom. 15:27). He and Barnabas — following the instructions of the Jerusalem Council and its leaders James, Peter, and John — saw assisting the poor as important (Gal. 2:7-10).

Baptist Global Response equips responders to plan for the safe distribution of aid because well-planned training helps maximize "cup-of-water" opportunities to aid limitless Kingdom expansion. Humanitarian crises are indeed tragic, but attempts to bring relief in their wake should not be.

Opportunities to deliver aid are also opportunities to reveal Kingdom principles of truth, grace, and wisdom to people whose needs are physical but also critically spiritual.

Melancon, who has served in international disasters for more than 25 years, is the Asia Rim area director for Baptist Global Response (gobgr.org). His commentary appears here courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style.

Religious liberty champion nominated for ambassador

WASHINGTON (BP) — Republican Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback's selection for the U.S. State Department's top religious liberty post by U.S. President Donald Trump has drawn praise from advocates for the freedom that is under threat in much of the world.



BROWNBACK

The White House announced on July 26 the president's intention to nominate Brownback as ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom. Brownback welcomed the opportunity despite being in the midst of his second term as Kansas governor.

"Religious Freedom is the first freedom. The choice of what you do with your own soul," Brownback said on Twitter after the announcement. "I am honored to serve such an important cause."

The ambassador-at-large oversees the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom which monitors religious liberty conditions overseas, proposes policies in different regions or countries, and establishes programs to further freedom of belief.

If confirmed by the U.S. Senate, Brownback will bring vast public service experience and a history of global religious liberty advocacy to the post. He has been Kansas' governor since 2011, after two years in the U.S. House of Representatives and 15 years in the U.S. Senate.

While in Congress, he spoke out for religious freedom in various countries and strongly backed the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) that created the post for which he is the nominee.

Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville, in a written release described Brownback as "an outstanding choice" who will be "an exceptional ambassador."

"He has my prayers and pledge of full cooperation, and I look forward to working with him in the years ahead. We need all the diplomatic and intellectual power we can muster in addressing these critical matters of human rights and global security."

"I urge the Senate to confirm Governor Brownback without delay."

Brownback's selection comes at a time when religious freedom around the world continues to deteriorate.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom — also established by IRFA in 1998 — said in its annual report in April that the status of religious liberty globally "is worsening in both the depth and breadth of violations. The blatant assaults have become so frightening — attempted genocide, the slaughter of innocents, and wholesale destruction of places of worship — that less egregious abuses go unnoticed or at least unappreciated."

An April report from the Pew Research Center showed 79% of the world's population lives in countries with "high" or "very high" levels overall of govern-

ment restrictions on or social hostilities toward religion.

Open Doors, which serves the persecuted church overseas, said in its annual report in January the persecution of followers of Jesus continued to rise, with about 215 million Christians undergoing "high, very high, or extreme persecution" in the last year in the 50 countries on its watch list.

If confirmed, his priority will be coordinating the Trump administration's efforts on global religious liberty. Brownback told WORLD Radio. The position, he said, is intended to be a "coordination role of multiple entities" including those that focus on security, economics, and diplomacy.

Brownback said he wants to bring the "various aspects of the administration to focus on religious freedom."

We recently went through our first tropical storm of the season. It was not a big wind event but a lot of gust and huge amounts of rain. Still, it was a storm and an indicator of things to come as the year moves along. About the same time that storm was coming in, I received in the mail a pamphlet I assume was sent to just about everybody in Mississippi, maybe in the Southeast, titled, Hurricane Guide. Those of us who live in the South and especially here in Mississippi know that storms are not just a few months out of the year. We seem to have them year round.

Sometimes the storms are in the form of a huge hurricane and at other times outbreaks of tornadoes or just one tornado forming and swooping down over a community. At still other times the storms are none of those but just an incredible rain that produces floods and flash floods which can be deadly as well as destructive. We live in a world where storms come frequently.

If you open your Bible and begin to read just the Gospels and do it with an eye toward storms, you will realize that in the lives of Jesus and His disciples, storms often came their way. In the Gospel of Mark, you get only to chapter four before this: "And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full" (Mark 4:37). Jesus and His disciples were out on the sea, a storm blew up, and they were in peril.

Storms, then as now, can be an unwelcome but normal part of our lives. The Bible says that it rains on the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:45). You and I live in a world where we experience storms that visit the just and the unjust. Those storms seem to have no sense of direction except to make a path of their own and hurt or destroy whatever is in that path. We know what storms look like that are created by the weather, but we can fail to see the storms going on all



Directions

Storm Warnings

around us that affect family, friends, and people we don't even know.

Those types of storms can look like disease and at other times, overwhelming debt. Sometimes a storm can look like divorce or depression. The greatest of all storms that affects all of us at some point along the journey is the storm of death. That storm may take away someone near and dear to us and leave us struggling to put things back together or how to deal with the sadness and grief of knowing the loved one is no longer being with them. Those storms are just as real. They're just as frightening and can do a lot of damage.

Fear seems to grip everybody when a storm approaches, and the reporting of the storm heightens anxiety we have already developed. The thought that makes storms most frightening is the fact they are uncontrollable. You can't reach out and grab the wind or push back the water. Also frightening is the fact that storms are uncertain. They may sweep across a piece of land where no houses exist and no animals are in danger and bring down a few trees and leave their mark, never affecting anyone. At other times they seem to come right where you wish they wouldn't.

You never really know. When I read the fourth chapter of Mark with Jesus and His disciples in the middle of that storm, I draw some truths that can help us as we face whatever storms are ahead of us.

First, we need to **prepare**. That's what the Hurricane Guide was all about. There are some things that you need to gather together in a safe place — water, food, the medicines you will need. Know what to do if you are without power. Prepare. The fact is that whatever storms are ahead of us, whether they be weather-related, emotional, physical, or economic, we may not be able to withstand everything coming our way but at least we can undertake minimal preparations.

I hear that word from the Book of Amos in the Old Testament: "Prepare to meet thy God" (Amos 4:12). Judgement was coming upon the land. God was acting against Israel and they needed to get right with Him. We too need to prepare by being in touch with God and being right with Him. Surely, all of us can come to the reality of life that we will die: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:" (Heb. 9:27). We can prepare.

Secondly, we need to **beware**.

People living in stormy areas know the weather can change quickly, but many make no thoughtful preparations. Every one of us should be constantly alert that storms can and will come, and I'm not talking about just the weather storms. I'm talking about all the storms of life. None of us are immune. None of us live without storms being part of our lives. When you get into a boat or when you set out for a day's work, you need to be aware that things happen. You need to be alert. Beware.

Thirdly, we need to **share**. With a storm coming you need to take care of yourself, but beyond that you need to be in a position to quickly help others. Share with them. Take care of their children, and even their pets. Take care of the elderly who may not be able to help themselves, and help calm their fears. As elderly people encounter end of life experiences, you and I need to understand that we need to be near to them. Even though the Lord promises that when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death He will be there (Psalm 23:4), it is comforting for people we love and for whom we care to have other people standing by to hold their hand and encourage them in the storms.

The last strength and hold for us in the storm is **prayer**. The disciples in the fourth chapter of Mark quickly called on Jesus and He was near. He spoke to the winds and the waters and then to them for He, more than any other person who will ever be available to us, can control the storms in our lives. On beautiful sunny days, we can look to Jesus and entrust our lives to Him. When the clouds move in, the day goes dark, and the storms of life overtake us, we know He is still there with us. Call on Him. Walk with Him. Trust Him, and you will be ready for the storms.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

Staff Changes



CAUSEYVILLE CHURCH, MERIDIAN, has called Gilbert Eaves as pastor. He is pictured with his wife Arina.



FIRST CHURCH, BYHALIA, has called Leland Johnson as pastor. He is pictured with Steve Delony, chairman of the pastor search committee.



MT. OLIVET CHURCH, FOREST, called Charles Ray as pastor July 1. He is married to the former Bonita Herring and they reside in Forkville.

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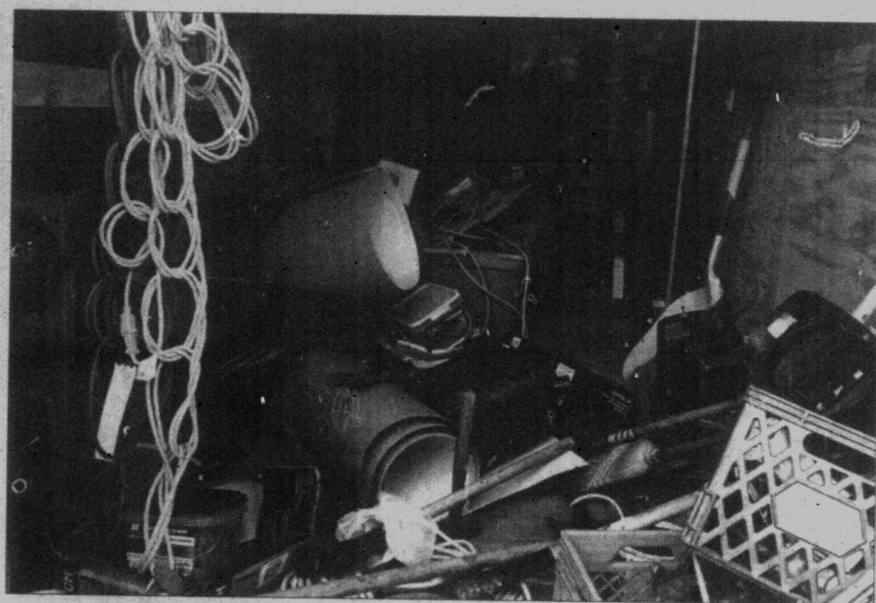
HT DLZ KXGRBIXGZ.

SRCGZ HUG: GLNDBGGU

Clue: T = F

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Hebrews 13:8

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005



CHURCH THEFTS — Tools and other equipment were stolen over the course of multiple break-ins during a six-day period at Suburban Church in New Orleans. (BP photo courtesy of Jeffrey Friend)

NOLA church suffers many thefts, remains optimistic

NEW ORLEANS (BP) — Just a few months from completing a renovation of its buildings heavily damaged by a tornado in February, a New Orleans church has suffered yet another setback with thefts from its worship center.

Multiple times over a six-day period, burglars broke into the worship center of Suburban Church and stole office and construction equipment, pastor Jeffrey Friend reported in a story published July 25 by the Baptist Message, weekly news journal of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.

However, just like the tornado failed to destroy the church's spirit, Friend said the thefts will not stop the congregation from moving back into its buildings.

"I truly believe wherever God is showing out, you should look for Satan to show up," Friend said. "I'm not surprised bad things have started to happen. In fact, I anticipated it but God has been doing amazing things at and for Suburban."

Among the items stolen were three computers, two televisions, two printers, power tools, and shingles. Until a security system can be installed in two weeks, the church also has to pay \$1,800 for overnight armed security guards.

Friend said an investigation by the New Orleans Police Department is ongoing.

An EF-3 tornado touched down in eastern New Orleans on Feb. 7, heavily damaging the church's facilities. More than



INVESTIGATION ONGOING — Stephanie Friend (center) wife of Suburban Church pastor Jeffrey Friend, and an unidentified member of the congregation speak with a New Orleans police officer about the break-ins at the church. (BP photo courtesy of Jeffrey Friend)

"I truly believe wherever God is showing out, you should look for Satan to show up."

Jeffrey Friend

Suburban Church pastor

100 churches across the U.S. responded to help rebuild the facilities in the months following the tornado.

Most recently, First Church in Haughton, La., worked on the rebuild and is teaming up with Grace Church from Spring-

field, Tenn., to help finish the worship center.

Cevan Spinney, pastor of First Church; Haughton, is the Louisiana Baptist Convention's president and Steve Freeman, pastor of Grace Church, is the Tennessee Baptist Convention's president.

Friend is hoping the stolen equipment will be recovered so the rebuilding process can continue without many interruptions.

"Pray that the skilled help keeps coming and we can afford to go in when it's time to go in," the pastor said. "It would be terrible to go into a new building and it's empty."

Bag weaving high art at Okla. church

BETHANY, Okla. (BP) — It started with a magazine article Eileen Atkins read about church members making mats out of plastic bags and giving them to the homeless.

It sounded like something the women in her church would enjoy doing, so Atkins told them about it, thinking someone else would take charge. To her surprise, the women asked Atkins when she was going to start the ministry.

"I didn't want to do it because my husband had just had cancer surgery and I thought, 'I don't think I can do this now,'" Atkins recounted, "but God didn't let me go so we started making mats a few weeks later."

Now, more than five years and 170 mats later, the "bag ladies" of First Church in Bethany, Ok., are going strong with their ministry to the homeless in Oklahoma City.

Every Monday from 10 a.m. to noon, anywhere from five to 15 women get to work sorting, cutting, looping, and making what look like yarn balls, all out of recycled plastic bags.

These balls of plastic bags are then crocheted into washable, moisture-resistant, three-by-six-foot mats. Each mat takes an estimated 65 hours to create and consists of 600-700 plastic bags.

"It's a labor of love," volunteer Nelda Schneider said. "I am a 'bag lady' and proud of it because I can't do much for the Lord now because physically I can't do things like I used to do, but I can do this."

Charlotte Boyle, who is fairly new to both the group and the church, said she's "very blessed that there is a way that I can help."

"I can't see well, and I have a lot of arthritis and limited mobility," Boyle said, "but I can help here by pressing bags for the other ladies."

What Boyle means by "pressing bags" is taking each plastic bag and folding it neatly in a way that allows the next person to cut the bag to make 2.5-inch loops that are used to roll into a ball.

Patsy Littlefield, who has been with the ministry since the beginning, said she enjoys the fellowship "and that I can do something for somebody else. Every week when we get together to make mats is just a blessing to me."

At 94, Duretta Drake is a master crocheter for the bag ladies, saying, "I'm a senior-senior citizen," with a laugh.

Like many of the volunteers, Drake does most of her crocheting at home. Some who offer their time to make the plastic bag mats are homebound, so women from the church take the needed materials to them to make the mats at their convenience.

The mats are distributed to the homeless through another ministry at First Church that takes sandwiches, soup, and clothing items to three different shelters in downtown Oklahoma City.

Each Monday as the ladies begin mat production, they have a devotional time with the Lord. "It hits us between the eyes every week," Schneider said.

The women involved in the ministry make sure each mat made has a special design so that each one is unique. The women divide bags into such categories as store, texture, and size. They have even used old plastic table cloths, proving there is no limit to their resourceful ways.

After a mat is completed, all the women pray over the mat and its future owner. "One of our prayers is that people [who] get these mats will know that we love them, somebody loves them, because sometimes I think they feel unloved but we love them," Atkins said.

Atkins pointed out it isn't just the bag ladies who are responsible for the production of the mats, but each person who has touched the bags from the beginning of the process when the bags are donated, to the end of the process when the mat is handed out.

"Everybody has had a hand in it," she said. "It is a team effort."



LABOR OF LOVE — Eileen Atkins holds a completed mat for the homeless made by the "bag ladies" of First Church in Bethany, Ok. (BP photo)

Just for the Record



CROSS ROADS CHURCH, PELAHATCHIE, youth and leaders served this summer in Ridgecrest, N.C.



SAULS VALLEY CHURCH, MONTICELLO, youth recently attended church camp at Lake Forest Ranch in Macon.



ETHEL CHURCH, ETHEL, recently ordained Allen Hearn as deacon. Ralph Hunt, pastor.



SUNRISE CHURCH, LEAKE ASSOCIATION, conducted Senior Recognition Day on May 7. Graduates included Courtney Jordan, Summer Martin, and Meghan Malone.



The WMU of **HARMONY CHURCH, WINSTON ASSOCIATION**, hosted a wreath decorating class June 17.



Clayton Pettit, Peyton Croy, Kason Croy, and Mason Pettit led worship at **TILLATOBA CHURCH, TILLATOBA**.



ARTESIA CHURCH, ARTESIA, ordained Mark Bolin and Kenneth Graves as deacons June 25. Jeff Morgan, pastor.



MILITARY CHURCH, SUMRALL, hosted Michael English in concert July 15. Shown are some of the church members and English (back row, center).



Youth from **UNION BAPTIST, TYLERTOWN**, recently attended Centrifuge at Union University in Jackson, Tenn. Shown are Tyler Phillips, Payton Brumfield, Mason McKenzie, Keith Sanford, Tyler Freeman, Kristen Fortenberry, Tiffany Mitchell, Alysa Broussard, and Timothy Mitchell.



PLEASANT HILL CHURCH, BOGUE CHITTO, sent 32 students and chaperones to Centrifuge & MissionFuge Camp at the University of Mobile in Mobile, Ala., July 10-15. Jacob Glasz, Student Minister; Floyd Higginbotham, Pastor.

In other Church News:

► **Red Creek Union Church, Perkinston**, will host singer Terry Jo Terrell on Sept. 10 at 6 p.m. No admission charge; love offering will be taken.

Just for the Record



The Young at Heart senior group of **CROSS ROADS CHURCH, PELAHATCHIE**, visited the Promise Land Journey, Collinsville, for a tour of the life-size Moses Tabernacle and the life-size Tomb of Jesus conducted by Bill Freeman of Covenant Life Church, Collinsville. Pictured are Kay Moore, Sarah Dodge, Freeman, and Carol Chancellor.



Alana Hunter, Greer Blaylock and Chloe Westmoreland of **FIRST CHURCH, EUPORA** attended Super Summer at Mississippi College in Clinton July 17-21. The discipleship/evangelism leadership conference is designed to provide qualitative spiritual growth and develop student leadership in Mississippi churches. Cody Robertson, student pastor.



Shelia Richardson, Andrea Haney, Rhonda Haney, Andy Haney, and Caroline Walker (not shown) went on a mission trip to Hawaii through the Collaborative Association. They are members of **SPRING HILL CHURCH, WATERFORD**.

Vacation Bible School



FIRST CHURCH, BOYLE, conducted Hero Central Vacation Bible School on July 10-14. Offering was donated to Baptist Children's Village.



LITTLE BAHALA CHURCH, WESSON, recently held Vacation Bible School. Pictured are participants.



SAULS VALLEY, MONTICELLO: June 28 - 30; Brandi Carney, VBS director; Winston Fortenberry, pastor.



GOOD HOPE CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA, recently held Vacation Bible School. Pictured are participants.



EVANSVILLE CHURCH, COLDWATER: June 19 - 23; average over 100 children daily; 15 children making professions of faith, offering to a missionary in Asia



CRYSTAL SPRINGS, WALTHAM COUNTY: One-day VBS camp, July 22. Danny Stevens, pastor.



CENTER CHURCH, BLUE SPRINGS, recently held Galactic Starveyors Vacation Bible School. Pictured are participants.

Trump planning to remove transgender U.S. soldiers

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — U.S. President Donald Trump wants to reverse military policy on transgender individuals, announcing July 26 on Twitter the United States will not "accept or allow" people who identify as a different gender than their biological sex to serve in the nation's armed forces.

"After consultation with my Generals and military experts, please be advised that the United States Government will not accept or allow [t]ransgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the U.S. Military," Trump said in a series of three tweets.

"Our military must be focused on decisive and overwhelming victory and cannot be burdened with the tremendous medical costs and disruption that transgender in the military would entail. Thank you."

Trump's tweet came a year after the Obama administration repealed the prohibition on transgender men and women serving openly in the armed forces. Then-U.S. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter set a deadline of July 1, 2017, for implementing the new policy, but new Secretary of Defense James Mattis announced June 30 a six-month delay in enlisting transgender people.

The unexpected policy change came without any explanation regarding its implementation and how it would affect transgender individuals already in the military.

The Pentagon, apparently unprepared for the announcement, referred reporters to the White House but administration officials did not respond immediately to questions about the action, The New York Times reported.

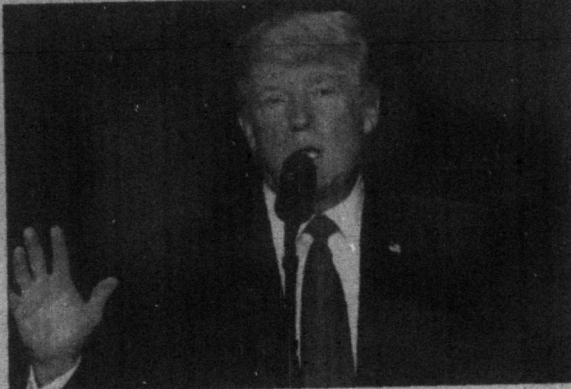
The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, which manages the U.S. military under the authority of the President, has said they need a formal order from the President before moving on his announcement.

Southern Baptist gender issues specialist Bob Stith said, "It is difficult to understand why the statement of President Trump — 'Our military must be focused on decisive and overwhelming victory' — should be in question."

"As an American citizen, as a father and grandfather, I strongly agree with that statement so for me the question comes down to, 'Can transgender serve without special considerations or disruptions?'"

In view of that, the military should not be tasked with either the expense or the hours expended by medical personnel for something which has no connection with the military and which is essentially an elective surgery," Stith said in written comments for Baptist Press.

"As Christians, we should not lose sight of the fact that these are real people who are struggling with something for which they did not ask — and which they do not un-



PRESIDENT TRUMP

derstand," Stith told BP. "The emotional and mental turmoil is real. It is absolutely critical that we speak with compassion and avoid any form of derogatory speech."

Stith is founder of Family and Gender Issues Ministries in Southlake, Texas, and formerly the Southern Baptist Convention's national strategist for gender issues.

Supporters of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender [LGBT] rights decried the president's announcement.

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the country's largest political organization for LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) rights, charged Trump with being unpatriotic and unfit.

"He has put a target on the backs of the more than 15,000 transgender troops proudly serving in our military," HRC President Chad Griffin said in a written statement. "This heinous and disgusting action endangers the lives of American service members, undermines military readiness and makes our country less safe."

"It is also the latest effort by Trump and [U.S. Vice President] Mike Pence to undo our progress and drag LGBTQ people back into the closet by using our lives as political pawns."

Estimates of the number of transgender people in the armed forces vary. The Williams Institute — a pro-LGBT think tank associated with

the University of California, Los Angeles — has said about 15,500 transgender individuals serve on active duty or in the guard/reserves. Last year, a study by the Rand Corp. estimated 2,450 transgender people are on active duty and 1,510 in the selected reserve.

Trump's action came less than two weeks after an effort to prohibit military payments for procedures such as gender reassignment surgery failed. Such an amendment by U.S. Rep. Vicky Hartzler (R-Mo.) failed 214-209 when 24 Republicans joined Democrats in opposition.

The President made his announcement three weeks after it was reported the U.S. Army had implemented new training procedures that require soldiers to accept the presence of people with the physical traits of the opposite sex in barracks, bathrooms, and showers.

In 2014, messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Columbus, Oh., approved a resolution affirming "God's good design that gender identity is determined by biological sex and not by one's self-perception."

The resolution stated, "[W]e continue to oppose steadfastly all efforts by any governing official or body to validate transgender identity as morally praiseworthy," and added, "We invite all transgender persons to trust in Christ and to experience renewal in the Gospel."

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CLASSIFIEDS

OUR CHURCH, NEW HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH, HAS A HAMMOND ORGAN FOR SALE, asking \$3,500. For more information call Mary Carpenter at 601-508-4064.

THERE IS AN OPENING FOR A DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS FOR NORTH CENTRAL BAPTIST ASSOCIATION (JACKSON AND WINN PARISHES), LOUISIANA. Resumes can be mailed to: North Central Baptist Association, Office and Personnel Committee, P. O. Box 159, Jonesboro, LA 71251. Resumes will be accepted until August 21.

12 PASSENGER CHURCH VAN FOR SALE: 2002 Chevy Express LS 3500 (70,000 miles) 24931 Hwy 45 Shubuta, MS. Mail bids to Oak Grove Baptist Church, P.O. Box 361, Shubuta, MS 39360 or email paul.fraiser@southernmissistrading.com. Bids accepted through August 24. Call 601-813-0890 or 601-480-8693. Oak Grove BC reserves the right to reject any & all bids.

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PULPIT SUPPLY AVAILABLE: Retired Southern Baptist Navy chaplain available for Sunday pulpit supply on short notice (pastor illness, vacation, rest, etc.). 100 mile radius of Hattiesburg. Member of Hardy Street Baptist Church, Graduate of New Orleans Baptist and Fuller Theological Seminaries. References available. Compensation unimportant. Contact him at 601-408-4608 or bennymhornsby.com

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MS POSITIONS

GUM SPRINGS CHURCH, BRAXTON, MISSISSIPPI SEEKS PIANIST to serve during Sunday morning and evening worship, and Sunday morning choir practice. Please submit resume to the Pianist Search Committee c/o Music Director, 121 Victoria Pl, Brandon, Mississippi 39042, or email to jmanderson1575@gmail.com

OSKYA BAPTIST CHURCH SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER. 1-2 years experience preferred. Mature Christian who loves the Lord and is called to help youth grow in their faith, help reach lost youth. Contact Oskyia Baptist Church at 601-542-5972 or send resume to oskyiayouthcommittee@gmail.com

BIG LEVEL BAPTIST CHURCH IN WIGGINS, MS IS SEEKING A FULL TIME PASTOR. Resumes may be emailed to samuel@albertsonaccounting.com or mailed to Big Level Baptist Church Attn: Search Committee 1346 City Bridge Rd. Wiggins, MS 39577.

LIBERTY BAPTIST CHURCH IN LIBERTY, MS IS ACCEPTING RESUME FOR A MINISTER OF MUSIC AND A PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER. Resumes may be sent to Liberty Baptist Church, c/o Bradley Geno, PO Box 73, Liberty, MS 39445 or emailed to bgeno@libertybaptistchurch.biz

MEADOW BROOK BAPTIST CHURCH IN DESOTO COUNTY IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER. The church is within commuting distance of Mid-America Seminary. Benefits include a parsonage, education assistance and GuideStone retirement contributions. Send resume to Oscar Goesslin, Meadow Brook Baptist Church, 3115 Old Pigeon Road Road, Dyke, MS 38611 or email to jaylor1@comcast.net

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Revivals & Homecomings

► **Chicora Church, Waynesboro:** Revival, Aug. 6 - 9; Sun., 11 a.m. and 5 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; James Messer, speaker; Mitchell Smith, pastor.

► **Sunrise Church, Petal:** Homecoming, Aug. 6, 11 a.m., followed by lunch; Ken Rhodes, speaker; David Kittrell, music.

► **First Church, Clara:** One-day harvest revival, Aug. 6, 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Jim Futral, speaker; Jerry Watts, music; Richard Bradley, pastor.

► **Rock Bluff Church, Daniel:** Homecoming, 11 a.m., followed by lunch; Tommy Miles, speaker; Gerald Slade, music; Donnie Stuart, pastor.

► **Centerville Church, Carroll County:** Homecoming, Aug. 6, 10:30 a.m., followed by fellowship meal; Zane Hodge, pastor and speaker.

► **Philadelphia Church, Etta:** Revival, Aug. 6 - 9; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 6:30 p.m.; P.J. Scott, speaker; Gerald

Frederick, music; Bobby Irvin, pastor.

► **Crooked Creek Church, Silver Creek:** Homecoming, Aug. 6; service, 11 a.m., followed by covered dish luncheon, memorial service, and singing; Chad Carney, speaker; The Langston Family, music; David Caves, pastor; director of music, Larry Davis.

► **Glading Church, Mississippi Association:** Revival, Aug. 4 - 6; Fri. - Sat., 7 p.m.; Sun., 11 a.m.; Mike Alexander, speaker; Danny Creel, worship leader; Thom Burris, pastor.

► **Calvary Church, Eupora:** Revival, Aug. 6 - 9; Sun., 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Chris Barrow, speaker; Alton Blanton, music; Martin Carden, pastor.

► **First Church, Lambert:** Homecoming, Aug. 13; 10:30 a.m. followed by pot luck dinner. Speakers: Floyd Smith, Bill Ashford, Pat Ruth, and Diane McNeil. Tom Goodson, worship leader. (662) 326-7772.

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. **Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted.** Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org

WCU

cont. from p. 1

almost finished and will be ready for the new class of medical students that will arrive in the coming weeks.

The Doctor of Physical Therapy program has also moved back to campus from its temporary location, and classes have gone on as scheduled this summer.

When students return to campus in the next few weeks, there will be a new academic building on County Drive next to the new Waddle Sports Facility. This building will house the classes that were in Tatum Court, a total loss that had to be demolished, and the School of Business while the new Asbury Academic Building is constructed.

Upon completion of the Asbury building, the building on County Drive will be converted into a band hall, studio, and classrooms.

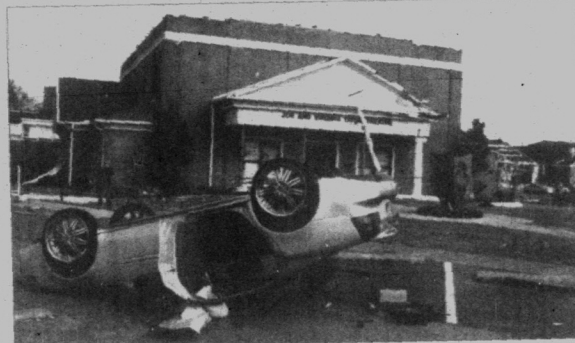
Construction has started on new dorms to replace Ross and Johnson Halls, which had to be removed. The new dorms will be ready in August 2018 and will add 50 rooms the university did not have before the tornado.

Also, the contractor has told university officials the School of Business building, which was extensively damaged and in doubt immediately after the tornado, will reopen in October - ten months early.

Construction of the new Tatum Court will begin soon and is expected to take 12-14 months.

The theme for the upcoming school year is, "God is our refuge and strength," based on Psalm 46. That Scripture passage was found on the open pages of the pulpit Bible in Bass Memorial Chapel following the tornado.

Overton is WCU's media relations and marketing coordinator. William Perkins, editor of The Baptist Record, contributed to this article. Edited for style and clarity.



DIRECT HIT - The William Carey University main campus on Tuscan Avenue in Hattiesburg was severely damaged when a large tornado struck before daylight on Jan. 21. No fatalities and only seven non-life-threatening injuries were reported. (BP photo courtesy of WCU)

William Carey University Hattiesburg Campus Repair and Recovery Updates

Phase I (completed)

- Cafeteria, post office/bookstore, library.
- Lawrence Hall.
- College of Osteopathic Medicine (COM) academic/administrative/clinical building.
- Thomas Building (physical therapy).
- Fairchild Hall (education).
- Smith Hall (education).
- Thomas Fine Arts building, except auditorium.
- Green Science Hall, north wing.
- Biology lab (new).
- Ben Waddle Sports Facility.
- Temporary repairs to dorms.
- Preliminary repairs to athletic fields and tennis courts.

Phase II (to be completed this summer or early fall)

- Permanent repairs to all dorms.
- Green Science Hall, south wing.

Auditorium.

- Wheeler Alumni House/admissions offices
- Clinton Gym, repairs and new annex.
- New classroom and office space.
- New paint, permanent windows, new flooring, and new ceiling tiles for all dorms.
- Bass Chapel.
- Anatomy Lab, College of Medicine.
- Sarah Ellen Gillespie Museum.
- Tatum Theatre.

Phase III (to be completed summer 2018)

- School of Business, renovation/restoration. Revised completion date: October 2017.
- Johnson Hall (new).
- Ross Hall, (new).
- Tatum Theater, new addition.
- Asbury Academic Building (new).
- Tatum Court (new).

Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



Sean A. Milner, Executive Director

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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is honestly designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

JULY HONORS

Mrs. Beverly Byrd
Mrs. Lona M. Southerland
Mr. Kenny Dorris
Turkey Creek BC
Mrs. Glenda Fry
Mr. & Mrs. Steve Warren
Mr. & Mrs. Hayward James
Mrs. Lona M. Southerland
Don Ray
Ray McGee
Sheila McGee-Rosser
Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Riley
Mrs. Lona M. Southerland
Ms. Robin Stephenson
Mrs. Joy M. Brown
Mr. Steve Story

Turkey Creek BC
Ms. Camille Thomas
Ms. Deanna B. Miller
Ms. Joy Ann Hennessey
Ms. Linda L. Moss
Ms. Suzanne J. Braddock
Bro. & Mrs. Ralph (Ann) Windle
Mrs. Lona M. Southerland

JULY

MEMORIALS

Mrs. Mamie Harvey Aldridge
Mrs. Lona M. Southerland
Ms. Shirley Alford
Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Sisco
Mrs. Willie Mae Anders
Ms. Audrey L. Hill



Gina and Rebecca Bell delivered cleaning supplies collected during VBS at LOLLAR'S GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH.

Mrs. Bonnie Austin
Dr. & Mrs. Steve Huber
The Braswell Family
Laura Kate Ball
Cedar Grove BC
Ranie & Sara Russell
Ms. Judy Barham
Mrs. Rose Vaughn
Mr. Billy Beasley
Jeanne Eubanks SSC,
FBC Madison
Mr. Charles Blose
New Henleyfield Southern BC
Frances Blose Obbs
VOTAW Electric
Ms. Brenda Blye
Mary/Martha SSC, Central BC
Mrs. Anna Bounds
Mrs. Ruth K. Nevels
David Bradshaw
Christ BC
Kenneth Breland
Mr. & Mrs. Arthur D. Burnett
Robin Breland
Cindy Hatten
Carla Osborne
Mrs. Bonnie Brown
Springfield BC
James "Bubba" Bryant
Mr. & Mrs. Barney J. Albritton
Jahazel Buckley
Mr. Ted Buckley
Mrs. Georgia Caffey
Mr. & Mrs. Roy W. Bolden
Mr. Tom Campbell
Patty & Beth Sullender
Mr. Gerald W. Carpenter
Mrs. Jean S. Moss
Ms. Inez Carruth
Mr. & Mrs. Barney J. Albritton
Mr. Lester Ray Case
Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Sisco
Ms. Katherine Castle
Ms. Audrey L. Hill
Mr. Jerry Lewis "PeeWee" Childs
CK Cattle
Mr. & Mrs. Chuck Madaris
Mrs. Jodie Mae Cloy
Mount Pleasant BC
Mrs. Ardis Ceter Cobb
Mrs. Neida C. Strong
Mr. Charles Commander
Mr. & Mrs. Bobby Ray
Mr. & Mrs. Jamey Litton
Mr. George H. Crawford Jr.
Billy B. Wilemon
Georgia W. Forrester
Sandy W. Tate
Frances C. Wilemon
Shelley P. Crawford
Chaplain George K. Crosby
Mr. & Mrs. Carl (Audrey) Cupit
Chris & Teresa Cupit & Family
Brett & Dottie Cupit & Family
Mr. Rob Dawkins
Mr. Charles W. Holmes
Ms. Lorena Dean
Mr. Charles Guice
Mr. Lloyd Denson
Branch BC
Ramona Descant
Branch BC
Mr. William Durr
Mr. & Mrs. Barney J. Albritton
Bobbie Jean Dykes
Cindy Hatten & Carla Osborne
Earl Gay Edwards
Mr. & Mrs. Barney J. Albritton
Elaine and Inez Herring
Mr. W. B. Herring
Mrs. Elizabeth Farrell
Ms. Audrey L. Hill
Mrs. Haley Ferguson
Mr. & Mrs. Terry E. Champion
Cabe Ferrell
Mr. & Mrs. Barney J. Albritton
Ms. Janice Fleming
Stanton BC
Mr. Robert L. Fortenberry
Mrs. Gwen Fortenberry
Mrs. Aline Foster
Mr. & Mrs. Barney J. Albritton
Ms. Lynn Lansing Gardner
Magnolia HS Class of 1950
Mr. Charlie A. Gentry
Mr. & Mrs. Herman L. Dungan
Mr. & Mrs. Robert L. Jones

Mr. & Mrs. Les Dungan
Mr. Randall Gilliam
Nieces & Nephews - Bonnie,
Joe, Harold, Larry, Shirley,
Janice, Brenda
Mr. Scott Goodnight
Dr. Rebecca Sue Wilkie
Mr. Philip Dale Grant
Mrs. Dot G. Griffin & Family
Mr. Bobbie Joe Green
Mr. & Mrs. Wesley Chandler
Ms. Eva Lora Green
Eunice SSC, Hurley BC
Mr. Shelby M. Grubbs
Ms. Madeline B. Grubbs
Mr. Johnny Haley

Mr. & Mrs. Joe Maggio
Mrs. Nan Hammack
Mrs. Lona M. Southerland
Dana Harpole
Mrs. Sheila Huffman
Drew Harrington
Mr. & Mrs. Jackie Wooley
Mr. Billy John Hart
Dorcas-Ruth SSC, Bogue Chitto
BC
Mrs. Loris Mae Bernard Harvill
P-P-He, Becky & Emma Adkins
Jo Ann & Rick George
Josh & Sandra Lynn Bright
Brad & Kerry Lightsey
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Brent & Maddy Lightsey
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SOCIAL SERVICES SECRETARY

The BCV has an immediate opening for an individual to fill the position of Social Services Secretary in the agency's headquarters in Ridgeland, MS. The individual filling this position must be a mature Christian adult with personal integrity, Christian character and a sound reputation. This individual must also have a demonstrated commitment to the ethical standards incumbent upon each staff member of the BCV staff and an appreciation of the confidentiality extended to children and families served by the BCV. This individual must be able to deal with children and adults in a warm, accepting manner. The successful candidate must have a minimum of an associate's degree or equivalent, and training and experience in secretarial tasks, and be proficient in general office computing tasks, specifically word processing, spreadsheet applications and data entry in various applications. Other significant responsibilities include phone coverage, extensive filing and significant interactions with members of the social service and clinical staff.

To apply for this position, complete an application found at <https://www.baptistchildrensvillage.com/about/careers-employment> and send it, along with a statement of faith and a resume copy to Kristen Slaven at 114 Marketridge Drive, Ridgeland, MS 39157 or to kslaven@baptistchildrensvillage.com.

BCV EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The BCV employs Christian, mission-minded, husband and wife teams, without dependent children or pets, to serve in the position of Houseparents. The couples must be mature Christian adults with personal integrity, character and of good reputation with standards and ethics expected of any member of The Baptist Children's Village staff.

They receive a salary with benefits and are provided a private bedroom and meals while on duty. The primary job responsibility of Houseparents is to maintain a home-like environment that models healthy, Christian family living for children and youth residents. They are the primary caregivers and help with everything from transportation and homework to laundry and meals when on duty.

Houseparent responsibilities are varied and somewhat dependent upon which campus and to which cottage the couple is assigned. However, all Houseparents need to be in good physical, mental and emotional health. They must be cooperative and comfortable working in a team environment.

To apply for the current Houseparent openings, please contact Celeste Cade at ccade@baptistchildrensvillage.com or 601-922-2242.

A complete job description and application may be downloaded at www.baptistchildrensvillage.com.

The Cleansing • Psalm 51

David only thought he had defeated the giant until he came face to face with himself and his own grievous sins against The Lord. One God-ordained confrontational visit from Nathan the prophet of God and Goliath of Gath suddenly seemed smaller than the stone David had used to fell him.

In 2 Samuel 11:1, David sent his mighty men into battle while he remained in Jerusalem. Royalty had its privileges. By verse 4 of that same chapter, adultery had been committed by David with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, one of David's mighty men. Bathsheba's pregnancy was the result. Shortly, a murderous conspiracy had been sealed. Uriah was dead, not by the sword of David, but by his order. Royalty. Adultery. Pregnancy. Conspiracy. BUT...this thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the Lord. David had forgotten (ignored?) his own spiritual transparency in the eyes of His Maker. Sin cannot be hidden.

With amazing grace, God sent Nathan to confront David concerning his reign of sinfulness. In 2 Samuel 12, Nathan (whose name means "gift") gave David an opportunity to admit his wrongdoing and after confession and repentance, receive forgiveness and restoration of his broken relationship with God. In verse 13, we discover why David has been called a man af-

ter God's own heart: "I have sinned against the Lord." David knew that his sin had separated him from God. This sin would produce lifelong, grave consequences. His sin must be confessed. Psalm 51 reveals the heart and soul of David. Through the fall and forgiveness of David, we find hope in spite of our own frailties.

Psalm 51 and Psalm 32 (next Sunday) stand as "before and after" portraits of restoration after confession and repentance. In introductory notes, both Psalms are credited to David as author. Both Psalms fall under the heading of "penitential" or the expression of deep, abiding sorrow over sin accompanied by confession and repentance, turning from that sin. Deep, abiding joyful relief comes from the release of that burden of sin. A broken, crushed, contrite, repentant, forgiven sinner will once again be able to walk in the blessedness of an intimate relationship with the Lord.

Lyrics from "Hosannah" by Hillsong United lead, "...break my heart for what breaks Yours..." David could have penned those words and sung them with his response to God through Nathan. Psalm 51 is filled with strong verbs paired with deeply personal pronouns. Be gracious unto me according to Your lovingkindness and compassion. Blot out (wipe away, erase) my transgressions (multiplied rebellions). Wash me (outside, clean me up) from my iniquity (twistedness and perversion). Cleanse me (inside, purify me) from my sin (missing the mark of holiness). I know what I have done: I have sinned first against You, Lord! My grandmother used to say, "We are sinners by birth, by choice and by practice. Maybe that's why we are so good at it!" Certainly, these verses were her primary scriptural reference material. Purify me. Wash me. Make me to (once again) hear joy and gladness. May my weary bones (broken by the loving discipline of the Lord) be able to rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins

and blot out all my iniquities. Through the line of Judah via King David would come One Who would literally "BLOOD OUT" our transgressions.

At Psalm 51:10, David leans in closely to the Lord he had set aside and replaced with his own wrongful desires and evil plans. He asks God to create in him a clean heart. God wants to give us a NEW HEART to replace the selfish, sin-filled one we inherited from Adam. David desires a renewed, steadfast, no longer wandering spirit. David clings to God even when he knows he deserves to be cast away. He fears the barren life of King Saul, his predecessor who forfeited the throne as well as the presence and power of the Spirit of God. He pleads for restoration of the former joy of his salvation. Rather than a rebellious attitude and action, he prayerfully desires a spirit of willingness. Then, and only then, would he bear an effective testimony.

He prays for deliverance from guilt of shedding blood. With his tongue, through open lips, his mouth will once again declare praise. Sacrifices will not suffice. Broken (in pieces) and contrite (crushed) hearts and spirits are the sacrifices that please God. Oh, the blessedness of forgiveness.

Brown is staff evangelist, First Church, Richland.



Explore the Bible

with Becky Brown

The Gift of Grace • 2 Corinthians 12:2-10

Your child's report card. Your favorite sports team's victory. Your prize from the deer stand. We tend to brag about such things. When something good happens to us we want the world to know. We are going to the coffee shop, the beauty parlor or to social media the second we do something newsworthy. That is how we are wired. No one in their right mind is going to brag on the deer that got away, a stinging defeat or a less than stellar GPA. We are not going to highlight weakness.

Pastor and hymn writer John Newton filled the pages of his autobiography with just the opposite. Every page seems to tell of a new lowlight in life. While serving on a slave ship in West Africa, Newton describes circumstances such as drunkenness, false accusation, imprisonment and hunger. Once the master of his ship locked him on top deck while the ship was in dock leaving Newton only one bowl of rice to eat. The crew returned days later from a bird hunting trip giving the starving Newton only the entrails of the cleaned birds to eat. Nothing there to boast about.

Paul also understood that weakness seemed a hard place to find anything to boast about. Our text gives little room for the comfortable Christian to see anything worth taking to beauty shop.

Paul had planted this congregation (Acts 18) and left it thriving. While in

Ephesus on another missionary journey he receives word that false teachers had crept in and undermined the work that he had begun. (11:13) This fact broke Paul's heart for Corinth was a labor of love. (11:11) Much effort was made to see that the Corinthians received a clear understanding of the gospel. The church had moved away from the simple teachings of Paul and discovered more impressive speakers and wonder workers. Crowds were responding and in a sense the church was successful. Would Paul deem such outcomes as boast worthy? In a word, no. If Paul was to boast, it would only be in Christ. (10:17)

Because of honor bestowed (12:2-7a)

Paul mentions a strange event of an unnamed man visiting paradise in a vision. Many evangelical commentators, including this author, believe that Paul is referring to himself in that he changes voice from vs. 5 and vs. 7. Again, this vision of the heavenly realm (Luke

23:43, Rev. 2:7) could be used as a bragging point for Paul but instead, by not naming himself, puts credit upon God who placed honor on Paul by allowing him to see a glimpse of things to come. Paul could rub in the fact that he was a privileged person because of extraordinary revelations (7a) but desired only for the Corinthians to know the One that gave the revelation.

Because humbling hardships (12:7b-8)



Bible Studies for Life

with Clay Anthony

Paul had an issue that remains unknown but it was enough to keep him humble. He knew there was at least once obstacle that he could not overcome. This hardship was enough of a roadblock to ministry that Paul took it to God in prayer multiple times. (8) This is what suffering and hardships are good for; they drive us to closer trust in God. No one looks forward to hardships but if we see them as catalysts that drive us deeper towards God at least we know their ending is for our good.

Because help arrives when needed (12:9-10)

Grace is sufficient for all times. No matter what Paul would face, he would face it by standing on the grace of God. His weakness led to hardships and failures which in turn led to more and more grace. The grace of God was enough to get Paul through his weakness (9) and on towards useful ministry. Boasting for Paul never includes one word of personal victory but only words the Corinthians would see as failure. That is the point: Paul's calling was to be impressive but only in impressing others to look to Christ. Where he failed, grace rescued.

Live it Out

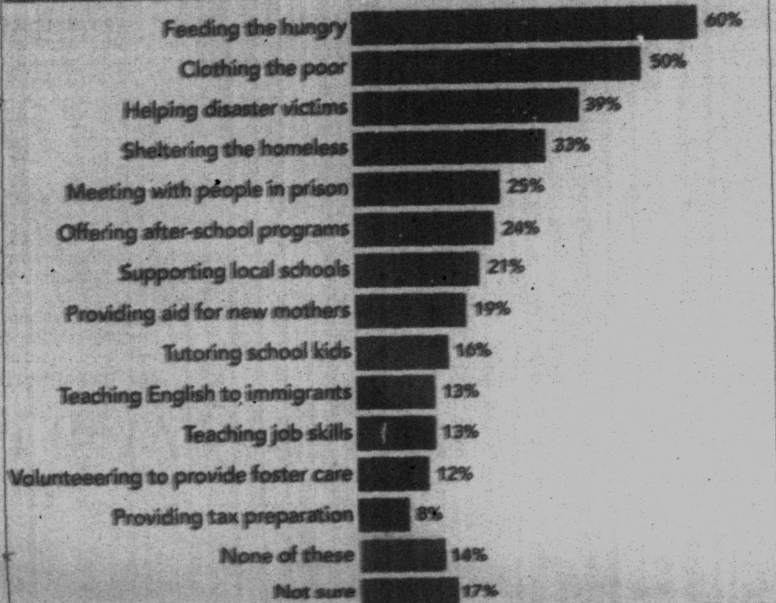
God's grace plus a weak human equals a powerful testimony. While it is true that many believers today face unspeakable trials for their faith, such trials are not a guarantee. Very few people reading these words will face shipwrecks, imprisonments or beatings over their faith. What is guaranteed for believers is that no matter what we face, it can be faced and endured through God's gift of grace. That gift, Paul found, was the only thing worth boasting about.

Anthony is director of the Collaborative Missionary Network, Oxford/Holly Springs.

Christians often don't get noticed for ministries

Among Americans:

Which, if any, of the following areas of service have you heard local Christian churches or their members doing in the last 6 months?



Note: Respondents could select all that applied.

LifeWay

LifeWayResearch.com

NASHVILLE (BP) — Many Americans are oblivious to various efforts by local Christians or churches to serve their neighbors, according to a new study from LifeWay Research, an arm of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville that specializes in surveys about faith in culture and in matters that affect churches.

In a survey of 1,000 Americans, LifeWay Research looked at 13 service programs conducted by churches from tutoring kids to teaching job skills. Americans were asked if they'd heard of churches or church members being involved in those activities in the past six months.

Six in 10 said they know churches feed the hungry. Half said they know churches give clothing to the poor. Beyond that, acts of service by churches often appear to go unnoticed, said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research.

"Unless you've received help from a church — or been involved in serving others — these kinds of programs may fly under the radar," McConnell said.

Few Americans were aware that churches help people prepare their taxes (eight percent), provide foster care (12%), teach English to immigrants (13%), or teach job skills (13%).

A few more knew churches tutor kids (16%), provide aid to new moms (19%), support local schools (21%), offer after-school programs (24%) and visit people in prison (25%).

About a third of Americans knew churches shelter the homeless and provide disaster relief assistance (39%).

Fourteen percent of Americans hadn't heard of any of these services by churches. Seventeen percent were not sure.

Not surprisingly, Americans who attend religious services at least once a month were more likely to have heard

about good works done by congregations:

■ Thirty percent said they've heard of churches tutoring school kids. Only eight percent of those who attend less than once a month have heard of church tutoring programs.

■ Forty-eight percent had heard of church members meeting with those in prison. Forty-five percent had heard of churches sheltering the homeless. Infrequent attendees were less likely to have heard of churches visiting prisoners (12%) or sheltering the homeless (27%).

■ Fifty-eight percent were aware of churches providing disaster relief compared to 29% of those who attend less often.

■ Seventy-two percent were aware of churches giving clothing to the poor, while only 39% of those who attend church less than once a month had heard of such ministry.

■ Seventy-nine percent of those who attend services at least once a month had heard of churches feeding the hungry. Forty-nine percent of those who attend less had heard of this.

Churches and church members often serve anyone from their community whether they attend services or not, said McConnell, but outsiders may not get the message which he said is a problem — if people don't know about a church's efforts to serve others they won't turn to a church when they need help.

With better awareness, those who don't go to church might show up to help their neighbors. A previous LifeWay Research study found that 51% of unchurched Americans — those who haven't attended services in the past six months — said they would be willing to help a church with a community service project.

"People who need help may be missing out," McConnell said, "and Americans who want to lend a hand might miss the chance to help out and along the way connect with the church."

LifeWay, NAMB join together for new web site effort

NASHVILLE (BP) — New research undermines an often-repeated statistic about church decline but still reveals a difficult situation for Southern Baptist churches — and an opportunity to encourage more Gospel conversations.

On his website, LifeWay President and CEO Thom S. Rainer has published findings from research of 1,000 randomly-selected Southern Baptist churches, including challenging the idea that 80% of churches are either plateaued or declining. The new findings are based on analysis of Annual Church Profile data from 2013 and 2016.

Unfortunately, Rainer's research doesn't give a much better picture than the generally accepted figures. His analysis found around 65% of churches are stalled or are shrinking.

"The evangelistic deterioration within churches across North America has been a reality for several decades. This is not new information but we wanted to find out the degree of the deterioration," Rainer said.

Even among the 35% of churches that are growing, the signs are not all positive. "Growing churches are primarily grow-

ing through transfer growth," Rainer said. "If we look at which churches are actually healthy from an evangelistic perspective, it's only about six or seven out of 100."

Rainer said he will continue to release new information on his website, ThomRainer.com, including insights into those six to seven percent of churches that have been effective at evangelizing their communities.

Rainer's analysis points specifically to worrying signs for smaller congregations. "Over 61% of churches average fewer than 100 in worship attendance," he said, "but two out of three of these churches are declining."

As a former small church pastor, Rainer said he's troubled by the findings which point to what he calls a "death spiral" for churches that dip below 100 in worship attendance. The research shows churches decline at a faster rate as they become smaller.

"Once a church declines below 100 in worship attendance,

it is likely to die within just a few years," he said. "The life expectancy for many of these churches is 10 years or less."

There is hope for the small church and its pastor that Rainer said knows first hand. "At the first church I ever pastored, we started with an attendance of seven. When they called me to be their pastor, it was either that or close the doors."

Rainer pointed out he didn't have programs or money. "All I had was the Holy Spirit giving me opportunities to share the Gospel. The turnaround started with me leading one person to Christ. Others in the congregation began to do the same."

"After one year, the attendance had grown to nearly 70. It wasn't money or the latest fad. It was just obedience."

As a way to encourage evangelistic obedience among pastors and congregations, Rainer has partnered with the North American Mission Board to launch EvangelismRenewal.com.

The site will encourage churches to record how many Gospel conversations they hope to have in 2018. "We know conversion is only by the Holy Spirit, but we also know that God begins most



of these conversions with Gospel conversations," Rainer said.

The goal of the research and EvangelismRenewal.com is to start a conversation about difficult topics but also to point struggling churches to evangelistically successful congregations and offer encouragement for those in decline to follow suit, he explained.

At the site, visitors can sign up to receive a free e-book, Rainer on Evangelism.

"We hope this will give church leaders a reason to lead their

churches to be evangelistic and give those in the congregations resources and ideas on how they can be evangelistic," Rainer said.

The website will contain testimonies, resources, and research, but the emphasis will be on encouraging Christians to share their faith with others.

"It is our prayer that the research, the website and the e-book will spark millions of Gospel conversations that God will use to bring about the conversion of men and women, boys and girls," Rainer said.